

Using the Heritage as a Venue for the Boutique Hotel

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Abstract: *This article examines the benefits of choosing a heritage as the venue of the boutique hotel. Based on the literature review, the first step is to determine the typical characteristics of the boutique hotel and the heritage and then find a link between the boutique hotel and heritage buildings. Findings show that the benefit of adopting heritage can highlight the uniqueness of a boutique hotel, which enhances the hotel's attractiveness to guests when choosing a hotel to stay into consideration.*

Keywords: *Heritage, Boutique Hotel, Guests' Expectations*

1. Introduction

When establishing a new hotel and choosing a venue, one essential issue for a hotel operator to consider is integrating its building and design. Meanwhile, it is indispensable for them to identify what kind of brand image the hotel wants to deliver to the guests (Aliouche & Schlenrich, 2011).

Increasingly acclaimed in recent years, boutique hotels have emerged and developed significantly as a distinct and unique accommodation type (Aggett, 2007; Henderson, Liew, Ong, & Quek, 2013). The boutique hotel industry has become an important segment of the general hospitality industry (Rogerson, 2010) and undergoing experiencing expeditious expansion.

Various in manifestations, heritage is of great significance as an essential tourist attraction point for many destinations (Henderson, 2011). Distinctiveness is often described in an older building, and the supply of heritage buildings seems to be of increasing interest to hoteliers and guests (Henderson, Liew, Ong, & Quek, 2013). As a particular site, the building with heritage may be a remarkable feature for a boutique hotel and a specific component to offer the hotel as an exceptional product to guests (Aliouche & Schlenrich, 2011) and meet the guest's expectations.

This report examines whether it is beneficial in attracting guests and highlighting the uniqueness of the boutique choosing a heritage site as the venue. Then it may give some ideas for hotel operators when opening a boutique hotel and understand the expectations of customers better.

2. The link between heritage and boutique hotel

2.1 Characteristics of a boutique hotel

In recent years, the appearance of the boutique hotel is generally recognized as an innovative reaction to the standardization and commoditization of the hotel (Victorino, Verma, Plaschka, & Dev, 2005).

Despite the considerable attention within the hotel sector, the term "boutique hotel" described as market segmentation is commonly acknowledged but lacks consensus of definitions (Jones, Day & Quadri-Felitti, 2013). However, in common with findings from other research, some similarities and concurrences of defining characteristics could be addressed.

Boutique hotels are related to a unique or particular accommodation, minimalist or heritage, and lifestyle amenities (Victorino, Verma, Plaschka, & Dev, 2005). Even though the definition of the boutique hotel may be various, most academic research agreed on the identification of the boutique hotel features such as size, design, service, decoration, and leisure facilities (McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Rogerson, 2010; Jones, Day & Quadri-Felitti, 2013). Aggett (2007) summarized that the boutique hotel is modern in design, with less than 100 rooms available, offering personalized services and high-tech facilities. The boutique hotel emphasizes small size, individuality, and personal service (Henderson, Liew, Ong, & Quek, 2013). It ranges from small hotelier to theme hotel by large hotel chains and seeks to offer guests an experience rather than just one-night accommodation (Lwin, Phau, Huang, & Lim,

2014).

Uniqueness is regularly mentioned to define the feature of boutique hotels in both trade and academic publications. McIntosh and Sigs (2005) summarized five essential dimensions of boutique sectors, including unique character, the personal touchpoint, homely feel of the accommodation, high-quality standards service, and the incorporation of historical or cultural factors. Boutique hotels are design-led hotels, with uniqueness and individuality defined by the historical or cultural significance of the buildings (Aggett,2007), combining with service quality characteristics, unique design, location, and facilities (Lim & Endean,2009).

Some of the boutique hotel's typical characteristics, in general, include the unique features that are design-conscious with historical or cultural significance and specialized in stylistic uniqueness.

2.2 Characteristics of heritage

As an integral element of culture, heritage symbolizes ethnicity, nationality, and identity of human beings but relates to different interpretations (Park,2010). Timothy and Boyd (2003) defined heritage as a kind of inheritance linked to past, present, and future generations, a symbolic incarnation of collective memories and traditions of contemporary societies. Heritage, rather than its historical existence, is a lasting and sustained influence on a given culture and society that counts. Park (2010) emphasized that heritage is a practical approach for enhancing the image of a nation, which empowers people to consider, imagine and validate their belonging to the country. Hence heritage is not simply part of the history asset but includes various cultural, identities, languages, and locality (Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

2.3 Advantages when choosing the heritage for a boutique hotel

A heritage building determines the nature of the hotel sector together with contributions of the culture and identity with concluding remarks.

The standardized hotel design stands for a type of global humdrum. Applying the local culture with unique characteristics allows the hotel to differentiate itself from other competitors and enhance the branding (Henderson,2011; Cetin & Walls, 2015). The adaptive reuse of historic buildings is experiencing global popularity as increasing demand and provision of boutique hotels among the tourism market (Henderson, Liew, Ong, & Quek, 2013).

A guest can distinguish one brand from the others to some degree, which is evidence of the brand's uniqueness. Southworth and Ha-Brookshire (2016) argued that incorporating cultural heritage with the brand positioning can demonstrate a comprehensive and personalized image. A new hotel in harmony with the architectural heritage could retain and communicate a sense of place (Lee & Chhabra, 2015). The design and uniqueness of boutique hotels could be regarded as the differentiation strategy, which will help win competitiveness with branded hotel chains (Aggett,2007).

Applying the heritage site into the boutique hotel is beneficial to brand characteristics and highlights the hotel's uniqueness to win competitiveness.

3. Meet the expectations of guests

Holjevac (2003) indicated that people in the 21st century would have more spare time. Instead of traveling only for leisure, they require different approaches for relaxation and begin to seek more diverse tours in culture, ecological and healthy. They expect recreational travel will be for their leisure time and provide a higher living standard and a better life quality experience (Holjevac,2003).

People's travel intention consistently influences their accommodation expectations, but their values and expectations distinctly change over time. Instead of selecting the hotel only for housing, more and more guests seek distinctive or exceptional hotels.

Guests are increasingly aware and interested in history and culture (Henderson, Liew, Ong, & Quek, 2013). Many visitors welcome local distinctiveness, and they want to get involved with destination culture and search for authentic and memorable experiences (Henderson, Liew, Ong, & Quek, 2013; Lim & Endean, 2009; Lee & Chhabra, 2015).

The popularity of boutique hotels increases with increasing attention in fine art and culture today (Lim & Endean, 2009; Park,2010). Hotel guests want an exceptional experience than before. The use of

older buildings in boutique hotels contributes to creating individuality (Lim & Endean, 2009). Heritage as a venue for the boutique hotel may not attract some guests, but this feature could be a reason for their choice for others. The boutique hotel can leverage the cultural and historical factors from the heritage and its venue to make it distinctive—the platform, at some point, maybe the hotel's brand in the market.

4. Conclusion

Considering the characteristics of the boutique hotel and heritage, heritage with culture immersion can best satisfy the uniqueness that a boutique hotel may want. A heritage building regulates the nature of the hotel sector and influences the hotel's culture and identity. Hence, choosing the heritage site as the venue for a boutique hotel is beneficial for enhancing brand characteristics. Still, the heritage features will highlight the hotel's uniqueness to be outstanding in the market.

People have changed travel intentions over time, reflecting on their choices of accommodations and expectations. Their growing interests in history and culture are observable and significant. Meanwhile, a unique experience is what people look for in their tours. Heritage as a venue for a hotel could be a prominent point of their choice to stay, which may become a once-a-lifetime experience for them.

As a unique or particular type of accommodation, the boutique hotel choosing a heritage building as a venue can benefit the boutique hotel in targeting specific guests and highlighting its uniqueness as a competitive advantage in the market.

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